



**OFFICE OF THE LT. GOVERNOR
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Op Ed: Community Development a Vital Part of Indiana's Success

Without a doubt, my favorite part of my job is traveling from community to community across our state to meet with Hoosiers. It's a beneficial exercise for everyone involved. The folks I meet feel more connected to state government when we bring it on the road to them. But more importantly, I witness the varying characteristics of each community and how vital it is for us to make them a part of Indiana's comeback.

I've been to all 92 counties and have made about 1,000 visits along Indiana's roads. Many of these towns, most cartographers couldn't even name. But whether it's a city of 100,000 or a town of 100, we need to help that community prosper.

As we begin to celebrate the 25th annual Community Development Week on April 25, I am reminded of the hundreds of Hoosier cities and towns our state government has assisted.

Helping our small cities and towns thrive and grow has been my longtime passion and my life's work, from my time as a county official, to my tenure as state senator, to today. One of my first actions as lieutenant governor was to create Indiana's first ever Office of Community and Rural Affairs. OCRA brought the resources throughout state government that help cities and towns under one roof, and it works with other agencies I oversee – Housing, Tourism, Agriculture, and Energy – along with other state agencies to move our communities forward.

We've put some of our best examples of community development online at www.in.gov/lg so you can see the good work we've been able to do in partnership with communities. In Porter County, we've boosted housing and tourism opportunities. We've helped Randolph County become an alternative energy leader. Wabash has become one of our state's best Main Street Communities. And in tiny Chrisney, Indiana, we helped build the nation's first zero-emissions library. We also have a listing of all the community development grants our agencies have given to each county.

These investments have created hundreds if not thousands of jobs in the state. But perhaps more importantly, they serve to strengthen our cities and towns. I've spoken to so many young people

who would love to remain in their hometowns upon graduation. The challenge becomes making sure there is enough opportunity to keep them near.

By creating attractive streetscapes, downtowns, state-of-the-art amenities, and updated infrastructure, communities of all sizes are able to compete for jobs and investment.

I don't expect anyone will throw a party to celebrate Community Development Week. Just know that while it's a special week on the calendar, it's a year-round effort here in the Statehouse.

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman Becky Skillman